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or to abuse her as he may do freely to the married women. There is no doubt about it: these girls and boys are set apart. They must not be touched by sophisticated adult hands.

VII. The Significance of the Marriage Ceremony

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Where both boy and girl belong to the same village and come from the same ghotul, the procedure is simplified and shortened, but otherwise follows the same lines as in the foregoing accounts. It will be seen that, in spite of various differences, the essentials of the rite are everywhere the same. The fundamental things seem to me to be these—the preparation and instruction of the bride in the ghotul, the ceremonial fetching of the bride by the bridegroom and his party, the building of a marriage-booth with its associated magical materials and patterns, the exchange of gifts and payment of a bride-price, the liberal use of oil and haldi to consecrate the bride and bridegroom, the procession round a marriage pole or booth seven times (the last two items are obvious borrowings from Hinduism), the tying together of the bridal pair, the pouring water over them (probably a development of a Maria custom), minor rituals designed to emphasize the unity of the couple and to ensure the potency of the bridegroom, the last visit to the ghotul and the official bedding of the couple by the chelik.

Let us consider the meaning of these essentials in more detail. In a brilliant analysis of the marriage ritual of the Bihari Kayasth, W. G. Archer takes a comparison from modern art. 'If we are to find an analogy for this wedding ritual, the nearest would be a surrealist poem, ballet or novel. In a surrealist work the action has a strange power and a mysterious charm. Strange persons develop their intriguing contacts and the action has an air of irrational urgency. On analysis it is seen that many of the actions are symbolic and the poem, novel or the ballet generates its power from the semi-conscious associations which its dialogue, gestures, scenery and action evoke. In the ritual of a Kayasth wedding, there is a similar use of irrational action, a similar use of persons with a strangely inflated power, and a similar use of semi-conscious symbols. The meaning of the ritual may be submerged and, for many, may be scarcely comprehended but its basis is in a symbolic system and its total effect is overpowering.'[1]

This will apply also to a Muria wedding, though the meaning here is sometimes more obvious; the Kayasth is a highly developed community and naturally resorts more to symbolic concealment of its real interests and desires. The different elements in a Muria marriage can be easily distinguished. There are first the many rites that emphasize the break with the old life and the entry to the new. There are the symbolic actions and materials to express the sexual aspect of the marriage and to ensure its fertility. There are the symbolic or overt arrangements to protect bride and bridegroom at this critical moment of their fortunes. The social and business aspect of the union of the two families is always prominent.

The length, complexity and extravagance of the marriage ritual is necessary to impress on boys and girls who are so used to love and sex the importance of the step they are now taking. Marriage here does not, as in so many other cultures, mark an initiation into the mysteries of sex. It is not, usually, the binding together of two people who have fallen in love with each

[1] From *The Wedding of the Wriors*, the manuscript of which I have been privileged to see before publication.

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other. It represents instead the end of a life of sexual and domestic freedom and the companionship of young people. It marks the beginning of economic responsibility, a change of residence, a transformation of the whole way of life. The ritual is adapted to emphasize this. There is the long week of preparation in the ghotul and the vigil of song and weeping that ends it; there is the parental feast; the obvious trouble and expense for everyone; the solemn regard for omens; the new clothes and ornaments. I have often been reminded of the preliminaries to an operation—the bathing and shaving of the body, the tests and examinations, the rendering of the person aseptic, the creation of a sense that the patient is a being already separate and apart who will never be quite the same again. So now chelik and motiari are prepared for an operation that will sever them for ever from the carefree joys of youth.

The importance of this operation is further emphasized by the treatment of bridegroom and bride as the Raja and Rani of their brief matrimonial court. They are crowned; the leaders of their community defer to them and treat them with respect; their 'army' and 'police' accompany them everywhere, even when they go to perform their natural functions; they must never walk but always be carried about; at the time of tika everyone salutes them; they are 'Raja and Rani for two days and a half'.

This is a time of peculiar supernatural danger and the measures taken to avoid it find their parallels in many parts of the world. The crowns are not only symbols of royalty but correspond to the wedding-veil. Bride and bridegroom are also covered with a cloth both at the crisis of the Lagir and other important moments of the ceremony. This, and the refusal of bride and groom to look at each other, is connected partly with sexual modesty, partly with the belief that it is dangerous even to see dangerous persons.[1] Bride and bridegroom remain silent for most of the ceremony; certainly they never speak to one another. 'This is a common taboo upon persons passing through a critical period, and the principle behind it is a natural impulse of egoistic sensibility, a sort of recognition of the importance of the occasion, combined with more or less of spiritual fear, either of general danger, or in this case, of danger from each other.'[2]

The ceremonial beating of the bride by the bridegroom and of the bridegroom by the bride, which occurs several times during the ceremony, is regarded by Westermarck as intended to drive away evil influences and may also be connected 'with the idea of gaining power'.[3] Protection from evil spirits is probably also the aim, or one of the aims, of the Jhoria Endanna when a group of motiari including the bride dress up as boys and the bridegroom has to try to recognise his future wife.

Among the demon-scarers employed during the ceremony may be mentioned the brooms tied to the booth, the oil so freely used, the tying of the hair in plaits, the carrying of bride and groom over the threshold and the ceremonial bath. Brooms are important as sweeping away ghosts and spirits; sticks or grass from a broom are often used in magic or divination. All over the world bride and bridegroom are carried during their wedding[4] and in particular are never allowed to touch with their feet the threshold which is generally haunted by spirits. The ceremonial bath is regarded by Crawley as intended 'to neutralise the mutual dangers of contact'.[5] The magical

[1] Crawley, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 44.
[2] E. Westermarck, *The History of Human Marriage* (London, 1903), Vol. II, p. 518.
[3] Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 532ff.
[4] Crawley, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 39.
[5] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 58.

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THE COURSE OF MURIA LIFE: YOUTH

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The red ants scattered over the marriage party are perhaps intended merely as a joke; they may, however, represent a survival of some former custom of ordeal. In British Guiana a man before marriage had to show his fitness for it by allowing himself to be sewn into a hammock full of fire ants.[1]

Yet to the participants in the marriage it is probable that its financial and social aspect is of even greater importance than the supernatural atmosphere into which they have projected themselves. The alliance of the two families is emphasized by the little rite of *samdki-bhet* at the very beginning and by the farewell of the new relations-in-law at the end. Their prayer—'Let there be no quarrels. Let there be many children. As the root is below and branches above, so may we be united'—and again—'See, from of old was our relationship ordained. May the Departed guard and continue it'—indicates the importance of the ceremony for the family, the clan and the ancestors. This is still further shown by the presents made to various relatives and, above all, by the gifts offered to the Departed—to the Pot in the old home to compensate the ancestors for the loss of a girl, to the Pot in the new family to indicate that the bride has left her old clan and joined that of her husband.

But it is not only family and village that the motiari must now desert; she has to leave her ghotul. So gifts and compensations are given: there is a feast, a farewell massage, and marriage-crowns are often put up on the ghotul pillar. Bride and groom bid ceremonial farewell to their old companions as they set out for their new home.

So far we have dealt mainly with rites of parting and separation: other ceremonies stress the social and sexual union of bride and groom and attempt to ensure its natural fertility. The giving of the bridal ring is a world-wide symbol of union, so is the ceremony of eating together. At the end of the Lagir circumambulation (itself a rite of aggregation with a subsidiary cathartic or prophylactic purpose [2]), bride and groom are tied together and water is poured over them. On two occasions, the bridegroom or his friends carry off the bride; this may be a survival of an older tradition of marriage by capture or may merely be intended to stress the emphatic break with the old life and entry into the new.

582 182 831 The sexual interest is both manifest and latent. There is little concealment or symbolism about the ceremonial bedding of the married pair, the vagina carved on the main pillar of the booth, the obscene horseplay between relatives, the constant cries of 'Penis' and 'Vagina', the songs, the jokes, the abuse. In such sexual jokes, says W. G. Archer, 'is a release of repressed energy which when applied to the marriage must necessarily make it fertile'.[3]

Other of the incidents and objects in the ritual are of a symbolic character. Some are directly sexual: thus the motiari bang the mahua branch up and down on the site of the booth just as Bison-horn Maria girls use their dancing-sticks, professedly in imitation of sexual intercourse. The pouring of water over bride and groom is a symbol of world-wide distribution, and the breaking of wooden poles links up with many examples given by Westermarck,[4] where

[1] Sir E. F. Im Thurn, *Among the Indians of Guiana* (London, 1883), p. 221.
[2] Westermarck, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 513ff.
[3] *The Wedding of the Writers.* And Westermarck says, 'The sexual indulgence of the wedding guests may, on the principle of homoeopathic magic, be a means of assisting bride and bridegroom in achieving the reproductive aims of their union'.—Op. cit., Vol. II, p. 590.
[4] Westermarck, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 457.

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things are broken to ensure or facilitate the consummation of the marriage. The Berber blow a cane to pieces. The Zulu bride breaks a spear. Among the Yakut dry rods are broken and burnt.

Haldi, with its yellow colour, is both a ghost scarer and a sex-symbol. It is significant that one of its forty-six ancient synonyms is *kewala*, 'lustful' and others refer to it as 'night'.[1] The oil with which it is mixed is, to the Muria mind at least, another sex-symbol, recalling the oil used in massage and that traditionally put on a lover's mat 'to make it slippery'.

Other objects are concerned more with the fruit of intercourse, for the fertility so carefully avoided in the ghotul is now passionately desired. The kalsa-pitcher is an obvious symbol of the womb: it is filled with fertile grain and a lamp (which stands for the act of love in folk-poetry as in Pahari paintings) covers its mouth. The arrow is another obvious sex-symbol[2]; the very interesting song on p. 119 connects the marriage arrow with the arrow used to cut the umbilical cord of the first child: here too the kalsa-pitcher becomes the pot from which the mother is bathed during the ceremonial uncleanness of the puerperium. The decorations of the booth, the strings of mango leaves so green and fertile, the coconut, the grain, the burning lamps, all hint at love and love's fruit. Even the curious rite where the bride and groom throw away their toilet-twigs and spit at each other may aim at ensuring union and productiveness. Most obvious of all the symbols are those connected with earth, for woman is everywhere the earth whom man must plough and sow.

The incidents and furniture of a Muria marriage, therefore, have not come together by chance. They are purposeful and charged with meaning. They express in vivid and dramatic form the working of the Muria mind. There could hardly be a more emphatic means of bringing home to a young couple their social, sexual and domestic union.

[1] See *N.I. Notes and Queries*, Vol. II, p. 39.
[2] Westermarck gives many examples, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 490; so does Arthur, *The Blue Grove*, pp. 172ff.

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796 he could not keep away from motiari; he chased them round and round the field. A Sirahe-medium collected a brass ring from every woman present to offer to the gods; this may have been a token of compensation for the presence of women at the festival, for in strict Muria tradition no woman should have been there.

XIII. Conclusion

771 182 This chapter has dealt with the theological and ceremonial aspects of Muria religion. This is far from being the whole story, for religion is for the Muria a very wide thing, consecrating every aspect of life, inspiring a comprehensive ethical system and linking gods and men, living and dead into a single family that even the intrusion of death cannot destroy.

Muria religion is not unlike that of other tribes—Bison-horn Maria, Raja Muria, Halba, Bhattra—in Bastar (though it has an advantage of the others in possessing a noble hero-god whose example is an inspiration), but it is very different from that of its neighbours. Its elaborate, rich and picturesque character is in striking contrast to the drab and languid faith of the Central Provinces Gond. The tribes of western Orissa near the Bastar border—Kond, Bondo, Gadaba—fully endowed as to personal culture, have a less developed and satisfying religion. The rites of the Maria of the Abujhmar and Chanda are stark and austere beside those of the Muria.

Muria religion, like Muria institutions, has probably reached the peak of its development. In its action on the Muria mind, Hinduism has had a fertilizing and energizing effect, far different from the Puritan destructiveness of its influence to the north. So long as the tribe and its institutions hold together, so long as they remain free from external interference, there is hope that this religion may continue to satisfy Muria needs and interpret Muria aspirations. Otherwise, I fear, now that the peak is reached, change will only bring decline.

Muria religion today is not without dignity and power. It has its distortions and abuses—many have been noted in the present chapter—but we must not confound the corruptions of a religion with religion itself. Even its superstitions may have their value. George Tyrrell once suggested that the superstitions of Catholicism provided 'harmless and healthy outlets for humours otherwise dangerous and morbid'.

Religion must fulfil and answer human needs. There is hardly a greater need among aboriginals than freedom from fear, and Muria ceremonial by aiming at the placation of god and ghost (the ultimate source of all fears) brings the great gift of solace. The desire for continuity is met by the elaborate funerary rites which bring the Departed home. The marriage ceremonial consecrates the Muria's passionate interest in the family. The fundamental longing for tribal unity and solidarity is expressed and strengthened by the great festivals when many villages dance together, share a common meal and unite in the worship of the gods. The gods intermarry and are related just as men are.

To the Muria, is God the rewarder of them that seek him? There is little that can be called love in the Muria's attitude to any of his gods. But there is gratitude often and sometimes a belief that a god takes a special interest in a man, furthers his cause and goes about with him. There is pride too; a powerful and important clan-god is a source of credit to a village, a fine litter of Danteshwari awakes feelings of patriotic delight. But generally the gods are feared; like the Departed they are dangerous and must be kept in their place. There is many a god who is never noticed except when he makes a nuisance of himself.

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MURIA RELIGION

Morals are not usually closely linked with aboriginal theology and ritual. Muria ethics, as we see elsewhere, are fully developed and reach a lofty standard. Part of the system undoubtedly derives from Lingo who during his earthly sojourn is believed to have taught many lessons of domestic fidelity and daily conduct, and whose own life and character is not ignoble. The other gods are less highly moralised, yet their worship probably has a moral influence. For example, when they return home after dancing all night at a festival, are the chelik and motiari better boys and girls? Probably. Their social instincts have been strengthened. Their whole life—gay, colourful, united, peaceful—has appeared more than ever attractive and desirable, and they know that it can only be enjoyed by the practice of certain virtues. They have learnt, in the common dance and common meal, the futility of jealousy, greed and pride. 171 182

This fulfilment of the need for moral growth is not, of course, a conscious one; nor is the satisfaction of the sense of beauty in the dancing, music and drum rhythm at festival, marriage and funeral. But it is there and it is most important. The phallic element is not obtruded, but that too is there and its presence reassures the people that this necessary and beautiful aspect of human life is not alien to the divine interest.

A few other points may be noted. I have already stressed the absence of fixed forms and even of a defined pantheon. There is no sacred book, no canon, no deposit of faith committed to a central authorised guardian, no regular liturgy. Religion is always on the move. Even the legends change from village to village. The living voice of the prophet is more important than the convention of the priest. The dream of today is more urgent than the tradition of yesterday. The position and reputation of the gods is constantly changing. As the Muria become more State-conscious, more patriotic and nationalist, as the opening of communications brings them more in touch with the Palace and the Dussera traditions, the worship of Danteshwari is likely to grow ever stronger. By contrast I think the cult of Bara Deo will wane more and more as it has done already in the Central Provinces. Indeed in the neighbouring Bindra Nawagarh Zamindari I have recorded a legend that the decline of Bara Deo was directly due to the British occupation; the old god was captured by the British who still hold him and derive their power from him. As more and more forests are reserved the ancient jungle gods tend to disappear; Kadrengal, lord of the hunt, is already a mere shadow of his former self. There is no need for missionary effort; the advance of civilisation will automatically change the character of the gods. I anticipate a considerable increase in the cult of Mahapurub and Bhagavan who are above earthly changes. Modern civilisation tends to push men's aspirations and their divinities up into the sky.

The Muria attitude to the gods is a curiously ambivalent blend of familiarity and terror, of humour, affection and abuse. Often they do not so much pray to the gods as talk things over with them, usually at the top of their voices. If they are not satisfied they abuse their gods with point and wit, or treat them very casually in an attempt to bring them to their senses. I was unable to obtain many *mantra*; I believe few exist; the expressions used for the harvest on page 25 and at the time of the hunt on page 42 are definitely intercessory rather than mandatory. The idea that the priest, by virtue of his position or his abstinence, can force the gods to his will, is alien to Muria thought. Yet along with the familiarity and homeliness, there is sometimes a very real sense of awe. In some of the hill temples, when a famous medium is possessed, when the Anga moves so mysteriously to show

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its will, at the crises of the bull-sacrifice, at the dance of the dead, the urgent and catastrophic nature of the unseen is emphasized and the worshippers are hushed into dread and reverence.

Muria religion, then, which anticipates the vast developments of Hinduism, is not unworthy of the great religious system which has grown up on the same soil and out of the same traditions. Of that system it is of course a simple and childlike version, yet it does not lack dignity, power and beauty, and the modern Hindu—if he is wise—will treat it with the reverence that is always due to children's things.

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when the father may be drunk and the mother tired and both ill-tempered, family life runs more smoothly and is more permanent.

In some cases, particularly in Africa and Assam, the dormitory has undoubtedly a military purpose. Sometimes this end is sought by sexual abstinence and segregation from the girls; sometimes, the people appear to think that their warriors will fight better if they have no frustrations.

Roy summarized the aim of the Uraon dormitory as having been in its time 'an effective economic organization for purposes of food-quest, a useful seminary for training young men in their social and other duties, and an institution for magico-religious observances calculated to secure success in hunting and to augment the procreative power of the young men'.[1]

I do not think we can ignore the magical aspect of the dormitory, though I doubt if this provides a reason for its foundation. For example, Shakespear reports of the Lushei Kuki clans that if a man kills a rhinoceros, his family will die unless he goes straight to the *zawlbuk* or to the forge and remains there for a day and a night.[2] The connexion of the dormitory and the magical forge is interesting. So also among the Chang, when a man kills a tiger, he must stay in the *morung* for thirty days.[3] When boys are initiated into the *darimu* of the Kiwai, they are shown a small image of a naked woman; this is expected to improve the supply of sago.[4] The chelik of the Muria ghotul have a special connexion with fertility rites.

Combined with these, there are entirely practical and straightforward reasons for the establishment of dormitories. Everywhere we find the need of a rest-house for visitors in a village and a special tradition of hospitality. In village life everywhere, it is useful and convenient to have the younger members of the tribe organized and available for work. Nor should we forget the apparently universal human tendency to form clubs. Where society is organized on an age-grade basis, this naturally leads to special clubs for the younger people and the unmarried. The aim of the Bondo, and possibly of some other tribal, dormitories in Orissa appears to have been to enable girls to find suitable husbands and to test their desirability.

No doubt all these causes have been, in their way and according to circumstances, operative in different parts of the world. The Bastar ghotul is peculiar in its elaborate organization of the sexual life of its members, in allowing close relations to live together in the same ghotul, and in having no military purpose.

III. The Muria's Own Theory

The Muria themselves explain the origin of their ghotul in several different ways. First and most important they trace its beginning back into the mythological past of the Gond race.[5] Some also stress the desire to segregate the youth of the tribe and thus prevent them being an embarrassment to their parents; others emphasize the need of providing a sort of Boy Scout troop which will always be available to look after visitors to the village.

The last is the least likely reason. The Muria country has only been visited by officials in the last sixty years and by officials in any number during the

[1] Roy, *The Oraons*, p. 211.
[2] Hutton, *The Angami Nagas*, p. 380.
[3] Shakespear, *The Lushai Kuki Clans*, p. 103.
[4] Beaver, op. cit., p. 184.
[5] The ghotul is possibly very old. A Jain text of the first or second century A.D., the *Brihat-Kalpasutra-bhashya* (Vol. IV, verse 3446), refers to the *Vijapharana*-shala of Tosali (or Bastar State) among the places to be avoided by Jain monks. This was a hut erected in the centre of the village where a fire was kept burning, and where a great number of lowly persons congregated to make selections for marriage.—Private communication from Mr V. S. Agrawala, Lucknow Museum.

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present century. The statement is one of those that are so often made with the idea that they will please the inquirer. 'We had to start the ghotul', said the headman of Binjhli, 'because we were ordered to maintain huts in which touring officers and subordinates could stay. It was a great problem how to look after these huts and how to serve the needs of the officers, who devoured more than a herd of buffaloes, whose ponies had to be fed with buckets of ghee, and at last we decided to put them in charge of the boys and girls.' It is true, of course, that though properly the ghotul and the Paik-gudi or Thana-gudi (official rest-hut) should be distinct, in practice most villages have no separate building for touring subordinates, and when these visit the village the chelik and motiari vacate their little club and turn it over to them. It is also true that the chelik have to see to the pitching of tents and to the supply of firewood for more exalted visitors. But the bulk of the work is done by the village Atpariha (drudge) and the Rawat (cowherd) from whose hands Hindu visitors are able to take water.

But this is an excuse, not a reason, for the existence of the ghotul. The same may be said of a suggestion made in Markabera that the ghotul was established to keep the tribe together, to maintain its culture and to protect its girls from the seduction of outsiders. The ghotul certainly achieves this end. It is an ideal instrument of the laws of endogamy. It is a powerful preservative of the old culture. But I doubt if the danger of intermarriage with outsiders has ever been acute.

In Markabera I also heard the interesting suggestion that the ghotul was founded 'to get the girls used to it'. We ourselves are so accustomed to the idea that a girl should be a virgin on her wedding-night, that it is hard for us to realise that many primitive people would very much prefer her not to be. Hence the *jus primae noctis*. Hence the ceremonial deflowering of girls by men other than their husbands. The ghotul might possibly—though I doubt if it could be the sole reason—have arisen from a desire that husbands should not have to face the magical infection of hymeneal blood.

We begin to approach the real reason for the ghotul in a statement by a very old Muria named Yogi who lived in Jaitpuri. The ghotul began, he said, 'because we didn't know what to do with these offspring of a vixen's vagina'—indicating everybody present. 'We were tired of settling their quarrels, and we didn't want their noise. So we said, "You all go off and play and spend your time together. You can do what you like provided you do the work we want from you, bring wood and water, tend the cattle, nurse the babies". At first we gave them a place on the verandah of someone's house, but there were too many of them and we got no peace, so at last we gave them a special house to live in away from the rest of us.'

The Lingo legend suggests that the ghotul serves the useful purpose of removing the younger brothers of a household from their dangerous proximity to the elder brothers' wives.

This is part of the truth but not the whole truth. I believe the fundamental reason for the ghotul is to prevent children watching what Freud called 'the primal scene' and to commit to the older boys and girls the task of educating the younger children, for which the parents have not the time or inclination.[1]

[1] Among the Tanaina, when a boy reached the age of nine he went to live with his maternal uncle, for it was feared his father would be too indulgent and not force his child into the stern training for a life of bear-spearing and on the sea. The uncle would throw the child into cold water and harden him till he was grown and he returned to his parents. C. Osgood, 'Tanaina Culture', *American Anthropologist*, Vol. XXXIII (New Series), p. 720.

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To understand this, we must consider in some detail the relation of Muria parents to their children.

IV. Avoiding the Primal Scene

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At about the time when children become capable of something more than games and food, they also become something of an embarrassment about the house. There is nowhere for them to sleep at night. They are always clamouring to go and play with the other children. They are apt to surprise the intimacies of marital life. The parents decide that it is time they went to the ghotul. At the age of six or seven, then, a child begins its dormitory life. In most ghotul there is a group of very small children, sent by their parents 'to get them out of the way'. They are not given ghotul names or any ghotul privileges, but the house serves as a sort of crèche, and after all most of the little children have older brothers or sisters there who can look after them.

One of the reasons often given by Muria to explain the existence of the ghotul is that 'it is sinful for parents to sleep in the presence of their children'. 'As soon as a child understands what it [that is, sexual intercourse] is, we send it to the ghotul.' Apparently the Muria parent does not consider the child capable of understanding the meaning of the 'primal scene' till it is about six or seven. But it is interesting and significant that the Muria should consider the point at all. It is indeed of such importance that I will quote all the statements that have been made to me about it. 'The very reason for the ghotul', said the headman of Jhakri, 'is that it is sinful to sleep before a daughter or a son. They must never see the parents sleeping on one mat, either by day or night. Suppose a little girl comes home late at night for some reason and finds her parents holding each other on the mat, they are very angry and abuse her saying, "Haven't you your ghotul to live in? Why do you want to come here?"'

In Malakot, the village Gaita told me that 'young children are only kept at home while they are too young to understand pleasure and pain. Very little children may sleep with their mothers, but then they must go somewhere else. They are always getting frightened, so we send them as soon as we can to the ghotul.'

Here is another opinion from one of the elders of Kongera. 'Suppose the child is two or three years old and suddenly wakes up to find its father copulating with the mother. The father goes on, he takes no notice, but the mother pats the child's chest saying, "I'll give you something to eat in a moment, but keep quiet now, my darling". The father also speaks sweet words to the child in order to deceive it about what is happening. But suppose it is a big child, of five or six years, then it is difficult. The father ceases his work and goes away. Next day they send it to the ghotul.'

And this from Binjhli: 'The ghotul was made simply to stop children watching their parents copulating. As soon as boys or girls understand what that is, we send them to the ghotul. It is a great shame to watch one's own parents at it. "What are they doing?" the little children say, wondering. "Why is my father throwing my mother about like that?" So we take them to the ghotul, and they ask no more questions. But what do the Hindu children do and the sahibs, where all live in one house and they have no ghotul?'

And finally from Alor: 'How difficult it is for parents to tell their bigger children, whom they have not yet sent to the ghotul, to go and sleep in another room. Some children are very good and understand, but others are stupid and insist on crowding into the parents' room. We daren't, even while

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they are asleep, pick them up and put them on the verandah. We feel very pleased when they begin to say, "This or that little girl has gone to the ghotul. I used to play with her, and now I feel lonely. Do let me go too". We send them to the ghotul very willingly.'

This desire to prevent the child from witnessing the 'primal scene' is interesting and important, though modern psycho-analysts are inclined to believe that Freud over-emphasized its dangers, and certainly any harm likely to be done to the child would have been done long before it reached the ghotul age. But it is at least significant that the parents are aware of the danger, that they think it not only embarrassing for themselves but harmful to the children, and that so many should trace the foundation of the ghotul to a cause which Freud would surely have applauded.[1]

But not only does the ghotul save the child from the psychological dangers of witnessing the 'primal scene'; it alters the entire parent-child complex by putting in the place of the father a new disciplinarian and in the place of the mother a new object of sensual attraction. 'When a boy or girl enters the ghotul', said a leading cheiik at Masora, 'he usually forgets his relations altogether. They say they have no relations. The head of the ghotul is the father, and the Belosa is the mother.' However strict the father may be at home, however insistent on the fulfilment of domestic and economic duties, his authority is nothing before that of the dreaded Sirdar, who can fine you, truss your legs up to the roof, make you a mockery to your fellows. The father fades into the background; if he comes home drunk and beats up the family, the children will not be there; his orders and curses are feeble before those of the Sirdar. The father may still control a boy's work and duty, but his emotional life is dominated by the Sirdar. The result of this has been well put by J. P. Mills. Speaking of the policy of the American Baptist Mission in Assam which has, of course, been to discourage the dormitories which formerly flourished there as in Bastar, he writes,

> In forbidding their converts to use the *morung* and in undermining it as an institution the Mission are taking a very dangerous step, from which they would surely have shrunk if they had considered the psychological aspect of the matter. A boy goes to the *morung* when he is very small—as soon, that is to say, as he 'feels shame' at sleeping in the same room as his parents. It is in the *morung* that he fags for other boys and is taught his duties in life and generally hammered into shape. This means that the *morung* tends to take the place of his father as a disciplinarian. This is most important, for it is from a son's feeling towards his father as disciplinarian that one of the great stresses of the family complex arises. Looking back over the thousands of Naga disputes that have been brought before me in the course of my service, it certainly seems to me that violent quarrels between fathers and sons are more frequent in tribes which have no *morungs*.[2]

Mills illustrates this by showing that in the Sema tribe where, as we have seen, there are no *morung*, such quarrels are disastrously common; Angami boys, who also do not grow up in dormitories, resent any form of discipline,

[1] The same desire is said to be at the bottom of the custom recorded of the Savara of Orissa who, it is claimed, never have sexual congress after nightfall, but go out together during the day to special places in the jungle. The tribe has no dormitory, and the whole family has to sleep together in a single hut. See S. N. Roy, 'The Savaras of Orissa', *Man in India*, Vol. VII, p. 331. But I believe the taboo on intercourse at night to be an invention. I discuss it in my *Myths of Middle India*.

[2] Mills, *The Rengma Nagas*, pp. 491.

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yet among the Ao, where the *morung* plays an important part, quarrels between father and son are rare.

Muria parents are tolerant and understanding. 'Whenever we hear the music of a drum', said a boy at Kabonga, 'we feel restless; we leave everything we are doing and go at once to dance and sing.' Here I was told a story, that is often repeated, of a boy who was sowing seed in his father's field. He had a whole measure of rice to sow, but when he heard drums beating in a neighbouring village he forgot all about it and went off to join the dance, leaving the pile of rice on the ground. Three days later he returned expecting to be beaten, but his father had understood the boy's feelings and had himself gone to the field and sown the rice instead. I have been told in various villages that for recognized festivals and marriages, parents are very sympathetic to their children.

[689] And indeed if the parents interfere with the life and discipline of the ghotul, if they stop their children going to it without sufficient excuse, they are fined—and so firmly established is the institution that they pay up.

There is very generally a convention that the parents know nothing of what happens in the ghotul. They are not even supposed to know their children's titles though, of course, they actually know everything that goes on. But the conventions must be observed. The children do not sing ghotul songs at home. A girl should not let her parents see her as she goes out to the ghotul or when she comes back. That is one reason why she returns home very early in the morning. She ought to be at work husking rice or cleaning the house when her parents get up. Should a girl meet her father as she is going to the ghotul, she should turn her head aside and walk away as quickly as possible. They should not greet or say anything to each other. But in some villages, in Kabonga for example, and at Jhakri, the older people have told me that when a girl gets engaged, her mother advises her to be very careful about allowing boys to take liberties with her. It is said, however, that the parents never warn a girl or boy against any particular person. At Jhakri, Raunu said that the mother says to the daughter at this time, 'Don't play and laugh too much with the boys; be happy, but don't let your hands and feet get into trouble. I never got into trouble nor did your grandmother; we were always known to be good girls for we never became pregnant. Never run away with a boy but marry the one we choose for you and don't quarrel with your girl friends.' So also a father advises his son to be very careful in his relations with girls who are already engaged to other boys. The reasons for this attitude are purely financial: 'Don't make a girl pregnant. We are poor people; I shall not be able to pay the fine; if you get into mischief you will have to go and work as someone's servant and pay the fine that way. Be happy but don't always run after the same girl.'

It will be seen that this kind of advice is very practical, and for that reason the boys and girls do not resent it. The parents are not concerned with the 'morals' of their children and, indeed, even when a boy makes a girl pregnant the parents generally stand by him and help him. When I asked a chelik at Markabera whether his parents ever got angry with him for sexual indulgence in the ghotul, he replied, 'Why should they, didn't they do the same when they were young?'

It is not easy to obtain information about the mother-son relationship. I have not heard of any 'possessive' mothers and the general circumstances of Muria life are such as to eliminate the dangers of the mother-fixation. Naturally, mothers tend to spoil their sons and fathers their daughters. 'A boy may be frightened of his father but he is never afraid of his mother. If

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he does not work properly his father chases him with a stick and he hides until he knows the danger is past and then his mother receives him lovingly and gives him special food.'

It is said that a mother often accuses the father of jealousy, saying, 'You cannot bear seeing that boy's happiness when he goes to the ghotul dance; can't you remember that you were a young boy yourself once and you too went to the ghotul?'

Widows' sons and only sons are often spoilt and indulged—'*Rînd he beta sînd*, a widow's son is a bull': he does what he likes and no one can control him. So too it is said of an only son that 'he brings home all the quarrels of the world: if he is given a pot to urinate in, he does it on the floor'.

On the whole the relation of children and parents is a happy one. This may be at least one reason why there is so little conflict and jealousy, so little strain, among the Muria.

In many respects, Muria practice corresponds to what Seligman once described as the psycho-analytic ideal of education. Melanie Klein, speaking of children rather younger than many of those in the ghotul, describes the upbringing of the future generation. 'We shall be more sparing of compulsory ethical requirements in regard to the tiny developing creature than people were with us. We shall allow him to remain for a longer period uninhibited and natural, less interfered with than has hitherto been the case, to become conscious of his different instinctive impulses and of his pleasure therein, without immediately whipping up his cultural tendencies against this ingenuousness. We shall aim at a slower development that allows room for his instincts to become partially conscious, and together with this for their possible sublimation. At the same time, we shall not refuse expression to his awakening sexual curiosity and shall satisfy it step by step, even—in my opinion—withholding nothing. We shall know how to give him sufficient affection, and yet avoid a harmful superfluity: above all, we shall reject physical punishment and threats, and secure obedience necessary for upbringing by means of withdrawing affection.'[1]

Of this passage Seligman says that 'my experience suggests that further investigation will show a very small number of psychotics among the less advanced of the primitive races, and here it is interesting to note that in the upbringing of their children these races do, to a considerable extent, conform to the psycho-analytic ideal' set out above. He adds that 'there is, however, one desideratum laid down by the author, which I believe is only occasionally fulfilled, "that the child from birth shall not share the parental bedroom"'.[2]

[1] Melanie Klein, 'The Development of a Child', *The International Journal of Psycho-analysis*, Vol. IV (1923), p. 445.

[2] C. G. Seligman, 'Anthropological Perspective and Psychological Theory', *JRAI*, Vol. LXII, p. 221. A terrible picture of the effect on a boy's mind and character caused by witnessing scenes in his parents' bedroom is given by Graham Greene in his novel *Brighton Rock*.

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THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

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Aga baga da dhoti roy saiya sona ?	Whence came the dhoti that looks so smart?
Gāndou kaiyada dhoti roy saiya sona.	The Ganda made the dhoti.
Aga waga dīng muyāng roy saiya sona ?	Whence came the bells that tinkle so merrily?
Kaser kaiyadīng muyāng roy saiya sona.	The Kaser made the bells.
Aga baga dīng paniya saiya sona ?	Whence came the comb that looks so fine?
Layon kaiyada paniya roy saiya sona.	The chelik made the comb that looks so fine.

Finally, I will give two examples of the many obscene songs that are sung during this dance, for otherwise it is impossible to get a clear picture of the meaning and atmosphere of the rite.

Nana jhoriyāna waiwoy gīlo tinwāna.	I am Jhoria: I will not eat half-cooked rice.
Nana jhoriyāna dais dudo poywāna.	I am Jhoria: jumping up and down I hold her breast.
Nana jhoriyāna podoh monde dekwāna.	I am Jhoria: I break the girdle round her waist.
Nana jhoriyāna hārspoche tendwāna.	I am Jhoria: I quickly pull off her cloth.
Nana jhoriyāna pudets bonde nekyāna.	I am Jhoria: into her I press myself.
Nana jhoriyāna teks bura mi-kachwāna.	I am Jhoria: I will pluck out my pubic hairs and throw them away.

In the same style is a Halbi Jhoria Git.

Go to sweep the booth, Belosa.
Where has the bridegroom gone?
He is nowhere in the house.
What can he be frightened of?
He is dying for his penis.
He is going to have his sister.
Where has he taken her?
He has taken her to the river bank.
What leaves has he spread for her?
He has made a bed of *jam* leaves.
Jham-jham he swings to and fro.
Bathing, bathing, he inserts it.
Get off, get off, brother, she cries.

These songs are sung by the bride herself and by a party of unmarried girls. They have changed their sex for the occasion and imagine themselves performing the sexual act as men. The significance of this will be seen when we discuss the ultimate basis of the rite.

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Various reasons have been advanced by scholars to explain this custom in different parts of the world. Frazer has emphasized the difficulty of the problem, 'The religious or superstitious interchange of dress between men and women is an obscure and complex problem, and it is unlikely that any

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single solution would apply to all the cases.'[1] He has suggested that the custom of the bride dressing as a male may be a magical means of ensur-

From a photograph in *Natural Man* by Charles Hose, by kind permission of the publishers, Macmillan & Co., Ltd

FIG. 116. Klemantan women dressed as men

ing a male heir. Certainly it is possible that cross-dressing has something to do with fertility. In Sarawak the Klemantan women dance in turbans and a sort of dhoti at a harvest festival which has been described as 'a celebration or cult of the principle of fertility and vitality—that of the women no less than that of the rice grain'.[2] Zulu women dress in men's clothes and go to herd their cattle to save them from disease.[3] Crawley refers to a custom of the Ngumis of Assam when men dressed as women dance in honour of the children

[1] J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (London, 1911-15), Vol. VI, p. 260. See also J. Abercromby, 'An Armenian Custom in the Caucasus', *Folk-Lore*, Vol. II (1891), pp. 179ff.

[2] Hose, *Natural Man* (London, 1926), p. 128. Hose gives a charming photograph, upon which Fig. 116 is based.

[3] Crawley, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 320.

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born during the year.[1] In the Mandla District of the Central Provinces of India, Gond and Baiga women from time to time dress up as men and go from village to village with spears and axes on a sort of ceremonial hunt. In each place they catch and kill a pig, an act normally taboo to women. That this is a fertility rite is indicated partly by the fact that it is practised in times of dearth and also by the songs used for the occasion. One of these is as follows:

Kutki kodon ke bharti hoe!	May kutki and kodon increase!
Kukra bilai ke jharti hoe!	May dogs and cats decrease!
Gai garua ke bharti hoe!	May cows and cattle increase!
Kukra bilai ke jharti hoe!	May dogs and cats decrease!

This is called Stiria-raj[2]; the custom is also known among the Maria and Muria. At Toakapal I was told how women made moustaches of lamp-black, put on dhoti and turban and went armed from place to place sacrificing goats and pigs. Koud women also dress as men and sacrifice fowls.

Frazer again suggested that the wife wears husband's garments in order to transfer to him her future pains at child-birth.[3] But there is no tradition of the couvade among the Muria, and it seems rather far-fetched to suppose that the young bride will already be so anxious about her pains as to wish to be rid of them even on her marriage day.

Another suggestion is that the marriage disguise is aimed at averting danger from the evil eye at a moment when the bride is particularly susceptible to the influence of hostile magic.[4] The marriage disguise has been noted for different peoples in Africa and India as well as in antiquity; sometimes it is carried so far as to substitute a mock bride for the real one. This was the view of Crooke,[5] after a survey of the Indian evidence, and the final opinion of Frazer.[6] Westermarck, however, who gives many examples of the marriage disguise, doubts whether all these practices can be explained as attempts to deceive evil spirits. 'Facts of this sort seem better to agree with Mr Crawley's theory of "inoculation", according to which the bride or bridegroom assumes the dress of the opposite sex in order to lessen the sexual danger by wearing the same kind of clothes as "the loved and dreaded person", and the greatest possible assimilation between them would best serve the purpose of neutralizing that danger'.[7]

But the Muria practice of not only disguising the bride, but also her companions, so that not even the husband can tell which is which, does appear to aim in some way at averting hostile magic or the enmity of the dead or evil spirits.

[1] Crawley, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 105.

[2] There was a similar custom among the Kol. 'In October, 1880,' says Haldar, 'I witnessed at Ranchi a curious sight of bands of Munda girls, wearing turbans, going about in procession armed with sticks, spears and axes. All the girls of a village so equip themselves and make a descent upon the next village to the east, carrying off whatever fowls, kids, pigs, and lambs they can secure. The village thus devastated takes its chance by sending a similar expedition of Amazons to the next village eastwards and so on. Retaliation is forbidden, nor is any resistance offered; and, moreover, it is quite legitimate for the invaders to seek their booty wherever they may be concealed. This festival, called *Jani-sikar*, takes place once every twelve years, and is supposed to have been started by a Raja of the Nag-bansi family, named Ganga Sahi, in the twelfth year of his reign.'—S. Haldar, 'A Curious Kol Festival', *North Indian Notes and Queries*, Vol. III, p. 98.

[3] Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, Vol. III, p. 216.

[4] Crawley, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 498f. and 318ff.

[5] Crooke, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

[6] Frazer, *Totemism and Exogamy* (London, 1910), Vol. IV, pp. 235ff.

[7] E. Westermarck, *The History of Human Marriage*, Vol. II, pp. 318ff.

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THE MURIA'S ATTITUDE TO SEX

In an interesting account of the women's hunt in the Ranchi District of Chota Nagpur, W. G. Archer has traced the mythological basis of the custom, but he points out that it also fulfils a psychological need. 'We shall only be grasping its real value if we regard it not as fact but as poetry, as the expression of a need rather than a statement of a truth.'

> This need may be defined as follows. In Uraon society, the principles of succession are male, the method of government is male, the salient offices are male. The men are by convention and tradition the social superiors of the women. But if this is the convention, it is only partly the fact. In Uraon villages, the actual relation is one of equality. It is as equals that the men and women dance. It is as equals that a wife and her husband order their family affairs. And it is as equals that they work and live together. There is thus a stress between the formal structure of tribal life and the actual feelings and emotions that thrust upon it. To relieve this stress is the function of the hunt and the myth.
>
> The myth shows that although the men may rule, it is the women who are also men. In its reliance on the success of a simple trick, it expresses Uraon pleasure in naive cleverness and under this typically Uraon cover, it mildly pokes fun at male incompetence. The balance is therefore righted. The women are recognized to be the equals of men.[1]

It is possible that we may have to connect the custom very deep down with the same tendency that has produced the eonist deviation. The last Jhoria songs that I have quoted give some point to the supposition that cross-dressing is an expression of 'penis-envy'. I have only given two songs of this nature, but there are many on the same lines which suggest that for once the motiari are able to assert themselves against the chelik who so constantly establish their sexual domination in normal times.

Probably several different reasons have combined to produce the rite. The Muria girls dance disguised at the marriage partly to protect the bride, partly to avert hostile magic or the evil eye, partly to restore the sexual balance of the tribe and partly too, simply because they love dressing up and get a lot of fun out of it. It is very amusing to see the unfortunate bridegroom trying to guess which of the many girls before him, all looking exactly alike, is his own wife. If he chooses the wrong girl everyone is delighted; when the right girl darts out of the group and beats him it is an occasion not to be forgotten.

But such cross-dressing is always ceremonial. There are strict taboos on men and women wearing each other's clothes on ordinary occasions, and this makes the rite, when it does occur, all the more exciting and impressive.[2]

[1] W. G. Archer, 'The Women's Hunt' in *Essays in Anthropology Presented to S. C. Roy* (1942), pp. 187ff. The same feeling is revealed in the widespread myth of the Island and Country of Women, which goes back to the *Mahabharata* and was recorded by Hiuen Tsang. For an account of this interesting subject and full references to the literature, see W. Crooke, 'The Land and Island of Women', *Man in India*, Vol. II (1942), pp. 274ff; J. H. Hutton, *The Angami Nagas*, p. 263 and my *Myths of Middle India*.

[2] In an account of prophylactic disguises for averting evil in the Bombay Presidency, J. J. Modi gives three types of sex disguise—

> (1) Proclaiming the birth of a boy as that of a girl.
> (2) Perforating the nose or the ear of a boy like a girl's.
> (3) Allowing the growth of long hair in a boy so as to make him appear like a girl.
>
> See J. J. Modi, 'Prophylactic Disguise for Averting Evil', *Man in India*, Vol. IV (1924), pp. 282ff.